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# CORADDI

*Summer issue  
1952*

## from the editor's desk . . .

. . . some comments on the new issue of CORADDI. The summer issue, of course, means a new staff; but new staffs are a recurring factor in the total scheme which composes the CORADDI world. They are notoriously well-versed in the literary attitude and vernacular. They are usually earnest and enthusiastic supporters of all that CORADDI has meant as an exponent of the creative arts. Traditionally, they are quick to outgrow their newness. They convene four times a year in the CORADDI office to put together the magazine, and their efforts are marked by the National Collegiate Press Association and by James, who cleans up the office. Once more the CORADDI has a new staff; but this spring you are getting what we believe is a new CORADDI. To be specific, the cover decidedly strikes a new note. We were irreparably spoiled by the cover of the Arts Forum issue. The dull greys and blacks are no longer acceptable, and we believe that you will find CORADDI's bright new face more interesting and inviting than the old one.

The four stories are frankly experimental, and in some cases they are admittedly gems in the rough. They will interest you as a group as well as individually. Collectively, they offer a refreshing variety of subject matter and approach. You will note in them serious technical flaws but you will not be able to deny the essential right of each of these writers to the story which she has chosen to tell.

We believe that those of you who looked forward to reading Doris Waugh's Arts Forum story, "A Crepe for Her Brother," in this issue will be pleased with the story which she has chosen to replace it. "Yesterday Was the First Time" is the story of a tenant-farm family . . . an old story made new by the writer's mastery of her material.

Nancy Fox gives us "The Game," one of those stories which other writers cannot help wishing they had written. You will like playing "funeral" with the little boy in Howard's Funeral Home; and you will be fascinated by the delicate balance of humor and irony which the writer achieves. CORADDI continues its emphasis on variety by giving you another experimental story, Florence Bowden's "She Was Louise." We found the handling of time element in the story particularly interesting. The writer has traced a transference of characteristics through three generations of women. The diversity of the Summer Issue is brought into sharp focus by the inclusion of Jarrad Denhardt's "Lay Me Down to Sleep," a story certainly different with its surrealistic tone.

Our poets strongly object to tagging their work. It has something to do with realizing the proper aesthetic response . . . of which, incidentally, these poems are fully worthy.

We are more than ever indebted to our editor emeritus by virtue of her fine comment on art criticism. Virginia Harris lends her talent to reviewing Jean Stafford's new novel, *The Catherine Wheel*. You will want to read the book . . .

Another new note in CORADDI is the demonstrated effort to tie in art work with the tone of the individual stories and with that of the issue as a whole. Phyllis Birkby's pen and ink abstraction beautifully complements Doris Waugh's story. Margaret Click repeated the tie-in idea with her feature, and you may be able to find a connection between Pat Hockett's woodcut and the poems in the center section. We were delighted to be able to include photography in the new CORADDI. This has been done, but not recently. Bessie Freeman's landscape is worthy of the frontispiece position. The pen and ink spots which add so much vitality to the appearance of the magazine are quite capable of standing alone artistically.

There is a promise implied in all things new. CORADDI would very much like to interest you in the really wonderful things which the people around you are doing in the creative arts. We are dedicated to high standards of creative excellence. We are bound, too, by a sense of integrity. We feel that you have a stake in art as it is expressed on this campus. We promise to try to make you aware of it.

G. H.

SUMMER ISSUE  
1952

Volume LVI  
Number 4

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CORADDI

WOMAN'S COLLEGE of the UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
Greensboro, N. C.

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# Yesterday was the last time

by doris waugh

This is the last time, she thought, looking down into the crumbling old well. This is the last time I will do this as long as I live. No matter how old I get to be, I will not do this anymore.

And when she thought about it and about what tomorrow would be like, she smiled.

The handle flew around and the rope flung itself off and down and away; and in the darkness the old bucket made a splatting sound when it hit the water. She let it settle before she began to wind the rope back up. For one minute she pulled on one end of the rope and the whole world pulled on the other; and then the bucket began to come slowly out of the well. The rope curled back up again and the old bucket came into sight and she lifted it off onto the shelf.

I have beat you again, she said to the world that was at the bottom of the well. This was your last chance and I have beat you again.

"Lettie, you fell in?"

"No," she said.

"Well, goddamn it, bring me some water then!"

Mama said, "Don't swear."

Lettie poured some of the water into a blue lard can and carried it into the house. She put it down on the kitchen table.

"Here's your goddamn water," she said.

"Don't swear, Lettie," Mama said.

"Well make him leave me alone then."

Mama said, "Theo, how come you don't leave your sister alone? How come you don't, Theo?"

But Theo was swallowing a great dipperful of water and did not answer. The water ran out the corners of his wide mouth and cut little rivers down the dirt on his chin.

"Theo's crazy," Lettie said.

But even when she said it, it didn't matter anymore. She said it almost tenderly, looking at big Theo dribbling the water over the kitchen floor. She put her hand down on his pale hair and leaned up against the kitchen chair.

"You're crazy, ain't you, Theo?"

Theo jerked his head away and banged the tin dipper into the blue lard can. Lettie smiled at his impatience and put her hand back down at her side. Go ahead Theo, crazy crazy Theo. Go ahead, there won't be any more times after this one, she thought. Because no matter how old you get to be, this is the last time.

She said fondly, "Poor crazy Theo," and he hit the table with his hand and moved the tired old chair away.

Mama was shelling beans. They were hard little white beans, and they made noises against the pan like rain in the middle of the night when you're only awake enough to hear pieces of the rain.

Mama said, "What's the matter with you, Lettie. How come you say things like that to your brother. How come you and Theo got to be making racket all the time at each other?"

Lettie sat down in another chair, took a lapful of beans and began to shell them.

"Cause me and Theo don't like each other," she said, slitting a bean pod carefully, counting the small white seeds. She grinned at her brother. "We don't like each other a damn bit, do we Theo?"

Theo drank another dipperful of water and then went to the screen door and spat it out into the yard. A few skinny chickens ran out from under the house to see what Theo had spit into the yard. He emptied the lard can at them and laughed when they scattered, screaming.

Lettie watched him, not saying anything. Mama watched him too. Mama and Lettie spent most of their time watching Theo, frightened that he might get sick and not be able to work, or that he might insult Mr. Chambers and cost them everything.

Theo came back and sat down at the table and watched the fingers of the two women.

He said, "I don't like beans."

Nobody said anything to him.

He said louder, "Beans ain't much to feed a man."

Mama gave him a tired, disinterested glance. "When you know a way to get better, you can complain louder," she told him. "If you'd get us a little bit ahead, maybe we could eat better."

Lettie stared into the pan where the white beans were falling like noisy pieces of a rainstorm. Let them fuss about the beans and about getting ahead. After tonight she wouldn't have to hear it. She wouldn't have to hear Mama's high little whining voice and Theo's big and angry voice pushing at each other. And she wouldn't have to eat any more beans.

"I work hard as I can," Theo muttered. "Mama, I work harder than a man ought to have to work." He kicked at a table leg, frowning. "Hell, we don't get it anyway. That man, *he* gets it. Hell, he gets it all."

"Don't swear, Theo," said Mama.

"That man, *he*," was Mr. Chambers and he owned the land and the worn out little house. Lettie had seen him several times; he would come around at planting and harvest time and he and Theo would talk about the cotton. In the spring and fall when Mr. Chambers came around to talk to them, Theo was very civil. He would stand in the field with a battered old hat in his hand, and he would call him "Mr. Chambers" and not "That man, *he*."

She said, "Why don't you tell him about it, Theo? Why don't you tell him we don't make no profit? And about how you work harder than a man ought to and he don't give us enough." She grinned at her brother again. "Poor crazy Theo."

Theo pushed his big red hand through his pale hair and glared at her. "Shut up, will you Lettie? You just shut up now."

Mama put her beans into Lettie's lap and got up to put a stick of stovewood on the fire. Mama was little and twisted, like a stunted birch tree, and her shoulders came sharply up and cramped her gray head down between them.

Mama said, "Now there you go, Theo. How come you don't ever talk nice to your sister? Mr. Chambers is a nice man. Maybe if you said it pleasant to him, he'd give us a bigger piece of the cotton money. Maybe he'd give us enough money to set out some vegetables, Theo. Why don't you ask him pleasant?"

Theo pushed his hand through his hair again, restlessly. "He wouldn't. That man, *he* wouldn't do it." He looked down at the floor and Lettie could see the streaks of dust and sweat on the back of his red neck. "That man, he hates us," Theo finished glumly.

Mama sat back down and filled her lap with beans. "Now that's not right, Theo. You know that's not right. He's just too busy to come by and see how we're getting on. When your Pa was alive . . ."

Lettie didn't want to hear it again, even if it was for the last time. She looked at Mama, frowning.

She said, "Why don't you say it out about Pa? He's not dead. You don't know that he's dead." She got up and went to the window, where a torn piece of screen hung open and the heat and flies came in. "He just left, that's all." She put her hand out to push the screen together but she knew it wouldn't stay. No matter what you did to that house, nothing ever changed. Nothing stayed fixed and the heat and flies just kept coming in. "Papa's not dead; he just left and you know it. You don't like to say it out because he just up and went away and you're still here working. But it's the truth, and you might as well say it out to Theo and me."

Mama began to shell beans very fast and a new wrinkle ran down her cheek like a drop of rain. The wrinkle ran down her cheek like rain, but it left a long line behind it. The beans fell quickly into the pan . . . they thumped and plunked and rattled about, but Mama didn't say anything.

Theo got up from the tired old kitchen chair and looked down at Lettie. Theo was very tall. "How come you had to say that?" he asked her, his eyebrows hunched forward. "How come you had to say that to Mama?" And Lettie didn't know why she had said it and she was ashamed.

She put her hand out and rested it softly on Mama's arm, a thin arm that ended in skinny twisted bits of fingers. "I'm sorry, Mama," she whispered. "I'm sorry I said it about Papa."

But Mama went on shelling beans very fast and she did not say anything.

Theo put his big hand down on Mama's shoulder. "She's sorry, Mama," he said awkwardly. "She didn't mean to say it about Papa and make you mad. Lettie said she was sorry."

But Mama's shoulders hunched forward a little farther and cramped her head and neck between them, and the beans kept falling quickly into the pan. Theo looked at Lettie across Mama's head and shuffled his feet uncomfortably.

"Guess I'll go feed the mules," he said.

He looked down at Mama and then said it a little louder. "I said I think I'll go feed them mules."

The beans made rainy noises when they hit the pot, very fast.

Lettie took her hand off Mama's twisted little arm and put her apronful of beans up on the kitchen table. "I'll come too," she said. "I'll see if the hens are laying in the barn again. Maybe we've got some eggs we don't know about." She stood up, looked at Theo, then looked down at Mama again. "I said, I think I'll go down to the barn with Theo."

"All right," said Mama. They went out the door.

In the barn, Theo put a few ears of hard corn into the long trough and unhappily examined a long sore on Bob's back.

"How you reckon that damn mule hurt his back that way?" he said to Lettie, but she didn't pay him any attention. She sat down on a bale of hay and swung her feet back and forth against it. She took a big smell of everything, so she would be able to remember it, and be glad she had left it all behind.

"I don't know, Theo," she said absently, "How should I know about an old mule?" She swung her feet back and forth and smelled the hay and the mules and the wet old wood.

Theo turned away from the mule. "How come you had to say that about Papa?" he said. He came over and sat down beside her on the bale of hay. "What did you say it for, Lettie?"

Lettie pursed her lips and lifted her shoulders. "I just got sick of hearing it, that's all. What good does it do if we pretend he died?" She swung her feet against the hay and they made quick sharp clunks, like the sound of Mama's beans falling into the pan. "Everybody knows Papa's been gone for years. Ever since we had to quit high school and come home." She looked up thoughtfully at Theo. "Sometimes I think everybody knows it but Mama. I think she keeps saying how dead he is, and she's nearly forgotten he just got up and left us, and we had to quit school and come home. I think she believes it, Theo."

Theo stood up and frowned at her. "Well, let her believe it then. It makes her feel better."

Lettie leaned back against another bale of hay and looked up into the rafters of the barn. Cobwebs hung in great strips from the corners, and the rotting posts were covered with mud-dobbers' nests.

Lettie said, "I wonder what became of him, Theo. I wonder where he went." She almost smiled at Theo. After all, this was the last time.

Theo climbed down into the stall and looked at the long sore on the mule's back again. "I don't know," he said. "I guess he really *is* dead."

Lettie stood up abruptly from the haybale and stared at him. "Don't you say that, Theo Barnes!" she said angrily. "Just don't say that." She kicked in the hay then, with a gesture like Theo often made. She said louder, "He is *not* dead—he went somewhere and did something that he liked, and he is *not* dead. And don't you say he is!" And then she began crying, with little hiccoughing sobs that made her throat burn.

Theo looked at her, bewildered. "What's the matter with you?" he said.

She kicked furiously at the hay again. "Nothing, Theo Barnes. Nothing, crazy crazy Theo! Just you keep quiet, that's all."

She swallowed the little sobs and the burning in her throat and ran out of the barn towards the house. Theo did not come with her. He stayed to look at the sore on Bob's back.

There wasn't anything to do after supper. There never was. Lettie and Mama would wash the dishes in the old striped pan and then they would go sit on the porch with Theo, watching him. Theo was usually too tired to talk. He would sit on the porch and not say anything, and Mama and Lettie would find a chair and sit down beside him. And after a while the sun would go all the way down.

Lettie sat down, almost smiling. This is the last time, she thought, and when she thought about it she could forget everything else, and she felt like kissing Mama on top of her gray hair or putting her arms around Theo's big red neck.

Mama said, "You gonna wash tonight?" and Theo said he was. She went back into the house to put the kettle on the stove.

Theo looked at Lettie for a long time before he said anything. Then he said, "When's he coming?" and Lettie stiffened in her chair and didn't move or breathe for a long minute. An irritable bird coughed in the oak tree, but everything else was quiet.

Then she said, "Who told you?"

Theo looked over his shoulder to make sure Mama was in the kitchen. "He did."

The irritable old bird began to fly about in the oak tree, looking for some place that suited it.

Lettie thought she was going to cry again but she swallowed hard and the burning in her throat slipped down out of sight. "How come he told you?" she asked him. She moved in the chair then, and it screamed against the porch floor. She said, "How come he had to go and tell you about it?" The oak tree rustled and moved again and she turned to it angrily. "Fly away, old bird!" she cried desperately, "just fly on out of here!" and the bird went away.

Theo didn't say anything. Lettie could hear the thumping of the handle turning on the old well to let

the bucket down. Mama was filling up the kettle. The handle would be flying round and round while the rope flung itself off and down the well till the world took hold of the bucket at the other end.

Lettie said, "What did Mama say about it?" and Theo looked up at her then. He got up and walked to the edge of the porch and stood looking out at the oak tree. The bird was gone, but Theo kept watching the oak tree and he did not look at her.

"I didn't tell Mama," he said.

Lettie felt limp with relief. She said, "What are you going to do about it?" but she knew already that he wasn't going to try to stop her.

Theo put his big hand around one of the porch posts and squeezed it, hard. His big red hand closed around the post and he choked the life out of it.

He said carefully. "I'm kind of tired. I reckon I'm just too goddamn tired to do anything about it."

Lettie sat there smiling. Theo wasn't going to do anything. When the sun went all the way down and the threshers passed on the road, he would come whistle for her, down in the woods like an old hoot-owl, and she would go and not be afraid, because Theo wasn't going to do anything.

She said, smiling, "Thanks, Theo. Thanks, crazy crazy Theo." But he still did not look at her.

His fingers choked the porch post again, as if he wanted to pull it out and bring the roof down on the two of them. He said angrily, "Don't thank me, Lettie. Goddamn it, don't you thank me. Go on and leave with him and the other threshers and don't come back, but don't you sit here on this porch thanking me." He turned and looked at her then, and his look was level and it was angry. "I'm just too goddamn tired to be thanked," he said.

Mama came out then and they didn't say anymore. Theo sat back down and Lettie looked off into the oak tree. The bird had flown away; every leaf in the old tree was quiet and sleepy. Once she looked up at big crazy Theo, but he had fallen asleep, in his chair. Poor crazy Theo, he *was* tired. It was hard for him to be forever growing things on land that was not his own, getting tired and sleepy, with nothing to do in the evenings but sit on the porch and feel how tired he was.

Mama woke him up after a while. "You said you were gonna wash," she said, and he got up.

"Yeah," he said. "I'm dirty. But you never get it all washed off." And he went inside the house.

Lettie sat out on the porch with Mama for the last time. A restless wind came up to the oak tree and stirred the leaves curiously, but it wasn't the same as the bird.

Lettie said, "Mama, I'm awful sorry for what I said about Papa."

(Continued on Page 10)



phyllis birkby

# On Looking at Art . . .

a feature by *margaret click*

Newspapers and magazines devote sections to reviews, critiques, and descriptions of what is going on in the world of art today—be it in music, the theatre, in literature, painting, or other fields. These articles concerning the world of art are important, but for many their values and purposes seem to have become distorted.

To use painting as an example—one can pick up a newspaper and chances are that therein will be a description of a current art exhibit being held nearby, or of a particular picture painted by someone in the vicinity. He will find the merits and demerits of the works discussed in detail by the critics; and instead of *going* to the exhibit, he simply reads what others have written about the paintings, looks at a few news photographs, often talks about them—sometimes at great length, and feels better and *falsely* satisfied for so doing. But he is using the review as an end instead of the means that it should be. It should serve as an introduction to a work of art, not, as is often the case,

the immediate, automatic acceptance of another's ideas on and approval or disapproval of a certain painting. Why should one so readily accept another's ideas as his own when the more adequate ones for *him* are those that he forms for himself. Many people have become satisfied to depend on the critic as a middle man, which is much like buying a new car and having someone else drive it for the first two or three years; and in so doing they have lost the value of the criticism and of the art. Perhaps this is the result of our culture today (machines and materialism) which tends to simplify everything and discourage those things that require meeting halfway. This avoidance of delving below the surface, and dependence on others to hand out ideas on silver platters has led so superficiality. People seem to fear growth through communication of emotions and feelings—to be afraid of the new experiences and wider outlooks that art can give.

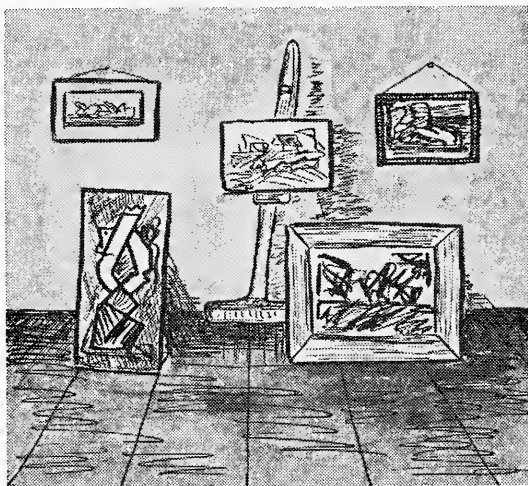
This practice so prevalent today—of having everything in concentrated, simplified form—has caused much of the diffusion of art to turn into confusion. It has caused sentimentality, sensationalism, lack of

sincerity, eccentricity (being odd merely for the sake of being odd), and other trite expressions to seep into painting; thus, making it harder to differentiate between a good and a bad painting. This is why it is important for people to develop, individually, sets of *valid* values with which to judge art. Otherwise its potential values cannot be gained or realized. Some people assume that what is visually perceptible to them in a painting at first glance is enough to define the whole of art (And to what a place this reduces art!) If they have just read that a painting is a composition in blue and orange and go to see it, they are confident that they know all there is to know when they see that there *is* blue and orange in it. But they utterly fail to grasp the significance of the form, content, or the sincerity of the artist. Often the statement, "I don't understand it anyway" is heard. One cannot tell what is in a box that has been given him until he opens it. Of course someone can say, "If there is a name on it he can." But the pleasure

of a gift is not derived from the label. Neither are the pleasures of a work of art derived from descriptions of that work—the descriptions and critiques serve as spring boards. They are guides, means to the enjoyment of art, but the work of art is an end within itself. To gain in potential value use should be made of the writings on art for such things as coming to a greater understanding of the trends in art today, gaining further insight, distinguishing between sincerity and trick effects, and determining

the difference in aesthetic values and shallow emotional outpourings. Then, in the midst of this superficiality and confusion, that fundamental, if intangible, element—the soul—will be rescued from obscurity.

The observer, the listener, the reader, the playgoer, the critic are influenced by the same external forces that play upon the artist; and when these forces become overbearing, the values given to and gotten from art suffer. But, when these forces are reduced to an indirect instead of a direct place, they are intrinsic in the works of art; yet the art has its basis in deeper aesthetic values, and, thus, is greater.





# ... The Game

a story by *nancy fox*

Swinging from the knob, his body a curve around the open door, David peeped into the room. He saw what he was looking for. It was a mountain covered with snow . . . there were ski tracks on it and dark places, which could either be trees or greyish ponds, frozen. It was all those things, and yet it wasn't any of them. It was a corpse. David edged closer to his mountain-that-wasn't-a-mountain and saw a face that seemed to come out of an icy cave. It's nothing but a man asleep, he thought. Looks like he's getting ready to snore. David's laugh, high and shrill, filled the room for a second; then there was silence again.

Since they had moved into this new building of his father's, he had lived in three worlds. One was the outside world of the park and his friends and his rabbit named Oscar, one was the world of their apartment upstairs, and the other was the world for which he yearned and from which he had been forbidden entrance—this world of the first floor of Howard's Funeral Home. But even if he had been told that he should stay away from it, he knew everything about it. He knew all about the people who came. They were dead.

His eyes moved around the room, seeing the red liquid in quart bottles marked "Bonded Permatone Champion Textone Arterial Fluid" which were against the pale green walls. Like Christmas, David thought. The shining silver instruments looked at him from their glass cabinets. He skipped over to one cabinet beside the embalming table and pressed his nose against the cool glass. But he couldn't get near enough; he opened the door and picked up a long tube. I could use this for a cane, he thought. Holding the rounded part of the poker-like instrument in his hand, he hobbled in a circle about the embalming table with his other hand on his hip, mocking old Zeke's walk. Moans and small sounds of pain escaped his lips, in imitation of Zeke. Wonder what else I can find, he mumbled to himself. Still leaning on his cane, he dragged himself to another cabinet, and began pulling out drawers. There was a funny looking machine in the corner—did he dare wiggle those buttons? No, he had better not. If anything was messed up, his father would know exactly what had happened.

He looked again at the body and, forgetting his cane which was propped against the cabinet, he moved closer. The man had curly white hair, and his face looked as if someone had pasted thin layers of cotton on it. David could tell by the outline of the sheet that he was a plump old man—like Santa Claus. That's who he was—Santa Claus! He would look like that without his beard. He must tell Susie and Sam and Gloria and Roddy and Jimbo. He would even bring them in to see poor Santa. But his feeling

of importance ebbed away as he realized what his discovery meant—no Christmas presents this winter! He looked again at the still figure. Oh, it couldn't be Santa Claus—certainly it wasn't—Santa—he was at the North Pole making trains and baseballs and atom bomb sets and Howdy Doody puppets and—this man didn't really look like Santa. Not at all.

David jumped, thinking that he heard his father's step, but it was only the wind blowing against



ann brown

the shades. If Daddy catches me he won't let me watch Hopalong Cassidy tonight, he thought. But his father and everybody else except Zeke had gone out on the funerals. Zeke was down in the basement taking a nap. Why, this would be the right time to play that new game he had thought up—Having a Funeral. He glanced again at the dead man and uttered only one word—"Faker!" Then he rushed out, slamming the door marked "Em-

balming Room," and through the side door.

Susie and Sam, the red-haired twins, were sure to be at the park up the street, he thought. And maybe Roddy and Jimbo would be there, too. He hopped into his blue ambulance which was almost a replica of those his father had and began pedaling furiously past the old homes and the shady trees of Bishop Boulevard. He did love his ambulance. Its siren was almost as loud as his father's, and it had a real stretcher in the back. Santa Claus had brought it to him last year, though his parents had argued over it. They had talked on and on about the ambulance. It was so silly—why couldn't they just leave it between Santa and him? They had made such a lot of noise about it until finally his mother had said "All right. Go ahead. Make an undertaker out of the child." And she had burst into tears.

"Hello, David."

It was the wavery voice of Miss Henretta. She was grey all over. He blew his siren at her. "You bad boy," she said, raising her veined hands to cover her ears and at the same time dropping the pink rosebuds that she was cutting. David moved his legs desperately to escape her.

Bishop Boulevard was an old section of town, and David's father was lucky to have been able to build his new funeral home in such an atmosphere of serenity and peacefulness. The only sounds that broke the stillness of the street were the occasional backfiring of a car, David's siren, or the laughter of the children floating over from the playground.

He could hardly wait until he reached the park to tell them about the game—Having a Funeral. He knew all about funerals. When his parents thought that he was busy with his Peter Rabbit picture books or his live rabbit, Oscar, he would listen to their talk of the terrible way Mrs. Murray had played the organ at the funeral and the way the preacher had forgotten the name of the dead man and had mistakenly called him Brother Ashton when Brother Ashton was sitting on the front row, twice as alive as he had ever been, and of the flowers and people and of the coffins and vaults. One day he had really put something over on them. He overheard his father tell his mother to be sure that he stayed in the front part of the apartment. His mother tried to keep him in the den watching television, but when she went to answer the telephone he ran on tiptoe into the kitchen and climbed upon the bar which was built under the double windows. The boys had the hose turned on—but they weren't washing cars or hearses or ambulances. They had the hose turned on—a man. He was lying on the ground. What a silly thing to do, he thought. Anyone knew that it was too cold for that. Why didn't Daddy want him to see it? The window was half opened and he leaned down so that the cool air would blow across his face. It was so hot in the kitchen where the lunch had been cooking. He felt the air first, and then he smelled it. It wasn't clean—it was like—he hurriedly jumped down and ran back into the den before his mother finished her phone call. What he had seen was a part of funerals, he guessed. He knew everything there was to know about funerals, but it was funny that he had never seen *that* part before. Funerals were loads of fun.

David turned into the entrance of the park on two wheels and jumped out.

"Sam! Susie!" he yelled. "Come here!" He spotted the two red heads in the swings. Fragile though his voice was, the twins heard it above the shouts of "Gowan, it's my turn now!" and "Give me that ball!" They shouted to him that they had waited hours for those swings.

"Come on, you two," David said. "We'll have a good time."

The twins looked at each other as their swings went high into the air together and Susie said, "We'll come. If we get some of your Mama's peanut butter cookies."

He told them sure, that was part of it. Then two war-painted, freckle-faced Indians, aged nine and eight, came towards them. It was Roddy and Jimbo. Jimbo took careless aim with his bow and arrow at David and scored his first hit of the day.

"Ow!" David said. "If you don't stop that I won't let you play my new game!"

"Who wants to play your old game anyway?" Jimbo asked.

"It's not an old game—it's better than *anything*," David said. "Come on."

Then they began running out of the park, laughing and kicking rocks all the way down the street until they came to the driveway of David's house. Then David remembered his ambulance. I'll get it later, he thought. Daddy might come home before I get back if I go now. As they neared the door, David said, "Sh! You've got to be quiet now." The four tiptoed into the front entry. Everything was hushed and still. David motioned for them to follow him down the thickly carpeted hall.

"Do you all want to ride up in the elevator?" David said.

"Oh yes!" the four exclaimed together.

"Well—I haven't worked it in a long time. But I can do it," David said. He pushed a button by the elevator and stood back, hoping something would happen. Dear God, he prayed, work this elevator. Make it go right. A noise ended his prayer. The elevator door was opening. Quickly the five entered.

"Now let's see," David said. "I—I—"

"Push another button," Jimbo said.

"I can't reach it," David said. "They must have moved it up. Last time I worked it it was down here. You push, Roddy. You're the tallest."

"Nothing to it," Roddy said as he punched the *Up* button. Automatically the elevator rose, then stopped, and the door opened.

"Here we are!" David said. The elevator had opened right in the show room.

Susie and Sam, five and a half years old, stared in astonishment at the dozens of coffins, while Roddy, the oldest Indian, was running his fingers over the spotless linings and throws of the opened caskets, leaving streaks of red and yellow chalk behind. Jimbo just looked.

"Now, let's start," David said. "The name of the game is 'Having a Funeral.' Somebody has to be dead and get in a coffin, and I'll be the preacher and say nice things about you and take up the collection and we'll need a couple of pallbearers, and—"

"Let me be It—dead, I mean," Sam said.

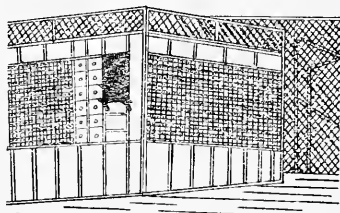
"No, no! I want to be It," his sister yelled, jumping up and down.

"Maybe we could have two funerals," David said. "Better not, thought. I'll say eeny, meeny, miney, mo. You're it, Susie."

"Oh, goody," Susie said. "Can I pick out my casket?"

"No," David said. "You can't look at them and tell which one you can afford. But I can. *This* one is for you." He pointed to a bronze casket, lined in an off-white color.

"Hey, David," Roddy said from the opposite end of the large show room as he stood by a rack of



betsey barber

clothes. "What's wrong with these dresses and suits? They're funny looking—they're all split down the back and have crazy hooks."

"I guess dead people like that kind," David said. "They're for the dead . . . Come on, now, and let's start."

Susie reached for the side of her casket and tried to boost herself up, but all she did was to start it rolling. Some of the coffins were displayed on rollers so that they could be moved around whenever necessary. She raised one leg from the floor and began pedaling with the other, as if she were riding her scooter. That was all that the others needed—they immediately jumped on caskets, and the show room began to look like the Misguided Missiles ride at the fair. Caskets were smashing into each other amid cries of "Look out, I'm coming that way!" and "I'll get you next time!" Jimbo headed for David's casket, hit it, and, surprised, David fell.

"Stop that, you!" David said.

He suddenly remembered the game that they had planned to play. "Let's stop this and play funeral," he said.

"Yes, let's," echoed Susie, the proposed corpse.

"All right," Roddy said. "But if it's not fun, let's do this some more."

All four helped put Susie in the coffin. She lay there.

"Close your eyes. You're dead," David said.

"I forgot my dying dress," Susie said.

"Hadn't you rather die in your own?" David said.

"I guess so," Susie said.

"You're supposed to have a lily in your hands," David said. "I saw a picture once and that corpse had one."

"When my granny died . . . *she* didn't have no lily. Her hands were together. Like this," Jimbo said. He put one of Susie's hands over the other. "That's right."

"Let's get started," David said. "You all sit down."

"Can we sit on the coffins?" Roddy said.

"No," David said.

Roddy and Jimbo and Sam sat Indian-fashion on the thickly carpeted floor.

"Brethren, we are here today to send this child to Heaven," David began. "She's been a good girl. One day she broke my toy car—"

"I did not!" said a voice from the coffin. The body belonging to the voice sat upright.

"Drop dead!" Roddy said.

"But I forgive her," David said as if there had been no interruption. "And I hope she will be a good angel. Give her a big pair of wings. Then she can fly down to see us. We can play together some more."

Roddy and Sam began dabbing at their eyes with their sleeves. A giggle escaped Jimbo.

"This is almost like Granny's funeral," he said. "Except Susie doesn't have any flowers. Granny had lots of flowers."

"I'm not through praying," David said. "Let her wear a ring around her head. Like God. Let it shine. Amen."

The others yelled "Amen!"

"Brother Sam," David said, "will you pass the hat?"

"What hat?" Sam said.

"Use your hands, dope," Jimbo said.

"You don't do that at funerals—that's for Sunday School," Roddy said.

"You do so, too!" David said. "This is *my* funeral, and what I say is right."

Sam began going through the motions of taking up the money.

"Now we'll sing," David said. "How about 'Put Another Nickel In'?"



betty bell

The four boys began singing the words of that song. Susie sat bolt upright in the coffin to add her voice.

"You children stop this at once!"

It was David's father. Black suited, black tied, he stood, a heavy, tall figure in the doorway. His face was grim as he surveyed the wrecked room and the four who looked at him in such amazement. He had been standing there in a horrified state for some minutes, unobserved by the children who were intent upon their game.

"We—we're not doing anything, Mr. Howard," Jimbo said.

David's father was oblivious to the sounds the children were making. All he could see was that the show room looked like something from a terrible nightmare. The opened caskets were streaked with wide red and yellow marks—caskets were disarranged—disgraceful! It would cost him a great deal to have those caskets restored.

David looked around a coffin at his father without speaking. He could tell that his father didn't think their game was much fun. His lower lip trembled. He backed away.

"I—I think it's time for us to leave," Roddy said.

"I think so, too," Jimbo said.

"Me too," Sam and Susie said. Susie jumped from her coffin. They followed Roddy along the rows of coffins which weren't rows anymore toward some steps that led downwards. David was left alone in the room with his father, who walked towards him. Mr. Howard had started into the room several times but each instant a sense of horror held him back. It was unthinkable the money that would have to be spent to bring some semblance of order out of this chaos! . . . too much that his son was the instigator of the affair, for he was sure that he was. He was especially horrified because it had happened today

(Continued on Page 23)

# Yesterday was the last time

(Continued from Page 5)

Mama said, "That's all right, Lettie. You was just tired. I guess we all get tired." She hollered through the door. "You got enough water?" and Theo said he had enough water.

Mama said, "Theo works too hard. This place is too much for one man to work when it ain't his own land," and Lettie said "Yes."

"We used to talk about how we'd buy a place of our own when we got a little bit ahead," Mama said. "We was always going to get away from this place. But that was before Papa di . . . that was before he went away. I guess maybe we'll get away and have a place of our own yet."

She smiled at Lettie and touched her timidly on the arm with a row of gnarled little fingers. "We'll have one yet, Lettie. You and Theo will have some place to settle, and I'll be here to see it."

Lettie took her arm away. "Yes," she said. "We'll have a place, you and me and Theo." And the wind moved in the oak tree again, looking for birds.

Theo came back out on the porch. He stood there, clean and damp, but still brown all over from the sun and wind and field. He said, "I'll think I'll turn in. I'm tired. And there'll be a lot to do tomorrow." He did not look at Lettie.

She got up from her chair. "You work too hard, Theo," she said, and it was a question and an invitation when she said it. "You ought not to work so hard. You ought to do the easy things."

Mama was happy again, now that she and Lettie and Theo were not quarreling at each other. "You get a good night's sleep, Theo," she said smiling. "After this season we'll make us enough cotton to get ahead. We'll buy us a place of our own and we won't work hard any more."

Theo looked down at her and his cheek moved back and forth for a minute before he said, "That's right, Mama."

He went into the house, walking slowly, as if his feet were heavy to lift up and set down. Mama and Lettie sat there awhile, watching the sun go all the way down before they went into the house, too.

Mama said, "You want to sleep down here where it's cool?" but Lettie said she'd sleep up in the loft. She wanted to sleep up in the loft on the last night.

Lettie climbed the ladder, smiling. This was the last time she'd go up that ladder into the loft, to lie awake and think about going somewhere like Pa had done.

Mama said, "You sleep good, Lettie."

And Lettie said, "You sleep good, Mama."

She climbed up the ladder into the loft, still smiling. The bedsprings creaked once downstairs when Mama crawled into bed. In the far corner of the loft, Theo had already begun to snore.

Outside, down in the woods, there came a little whistle, like an old hoot-owl. It hooted once; then there was a long silence. After that, it hooted over and over again, insistently. The night came on blackly, and the moon scrambled up the sky until it shone into the loft, and after a long time the hoot-owl quit making noises down in the woods.

Lettie lay in her bed, an old pillow tight over her head and her hands pushed fiercely into her eyes. She cried for a long time after the hoot-owl went away. She went on crying softly and hopelessly, even when the sky began to grow light and the sunshine appeared faintly in strips along the floor. She was still crying when the sun rose, but she knew it was for the last time.

Eyes move down deeply—violet by a candle—  
Gold in softened edges because night  
Wears in rooms a tender mouth  
Where love is. Somewhere finely drawn  
Across the space of a shadow,  
Some timeless eyes, and the beloved treachery of  
small flames,  
Is the thin perilous note—blessed because out of  
context—  
Of all our sorrowing hopes gone hunting.  
When, in actuality, neither hunting nor even hunted  
Far less, far less hoping, the thus gotten game out  
of season.  
But not by a candle. Found in older places  
A finished theme played backward for variety  
Yet somehow, somehow become the moment in its  
home.

*barbara mclellan*

by jean stafford  
harcourt, brace and company, 1951

Countless novels have been written about Maine and her people—usually pictured as corrupt but rugged individualists — her major industry — the seasonal importation of moneyed Mid-Westerners with nothing between their ears but wallets bulging full—and her fabulous and faintly ridiculous summer art and literary colonies. In *The Catherine Wheel*, Jean Stafford has written a novel with Maine in summer as a setting, a novel literally peppered with those human oddities characteristic of such novels, a novel about the summer people who spend three months and more than half their incomes keeping up with the Joneses in quaint little towns where you can still get molasses drawn from the keg. And here the parallel ends.

For all of the fact that Miss Stafford is writing about a place that has been written about before and interminably, and about (especially in the cases of her many delightful minor characters) odd people who wallow contentedly in their own peculiarities, she does it with a serious difference.

*The Catherine Wheel* is the story of lovely, middle-aged, impulsive Katherine Congreve, her unhappy love affair and its renaissance, and her lonely ingrown nephew, Andrew, who in the course of the summer learns to hate and pays the penalty. Cousin Katherine is a Bostonian, and spends her summers at Congreve House in Maine, in the company of the Shipley children while their parents tour Europe.

Long before the story starts, Cousin Katherine was very much in love with John Shipley, Andrew's father. But when Maeve, courtesy daughter to Katherine's proud, scholarly father, whom Katherine called "the Humanist," arrived that summer at Congreve House, she unknowingly snatched John away. Because the lovers were sure that Katherine was the one who managed their love affair, the three formed a "triumvirate," and by the time, some years later, when the story begins, "... the unity of their outward pattern and color gave to them an inner oneness, like a culture or nationality, so that their responses to everything, unrehearsed, were exactly the same ..."

Now, John, terrified by approaching age and what seems to him the pointlessness of his own life, has fallen in love with Katherine. All through the summer Katherine is pulled nearer and nearer the breaking point by the struggle within herself and by her fear that young Andrew may know what is going on inside her.

Andrew does not know; Andrew is obsessed by the violent hatred he has worked up for the brother of the boy who used to be his companion all summer. The brother is a sailor, home on sick-leave, and Andrew's friend, Victor Smithwick, whose "...

## The Catherine Wheel

head consisted of a woodchuck's upper lip from which obtruded two large oblong teeth, a porcine nose that pointed skyward . . . and who wore his ears high upon his head and they were red; his pigeon-toed feet were huge and his hands were pebbled all over with big, pied warts . . ." was interested only in caring for his malarial brother. He had no time to watch the alewives run, or to go clamming, or to do any of the other things that he and Andrew did together in other, wonderful summers.

The two characters, both tortured by emotions they must keep secret, work out their complicated affairs in the course of a quiet summer.

The book is beautifully written, fragile, filled out by a judicious use of pungent and unassuming detail. The major characters are completely believable, the minor ones silly but entertaining, and the theme is a large enough one to force admiration for the author brave enough to attempt it.

But somewhere, sometime in this series of bright blue, quiet days, something goes wrong. Cousin Katherine's love affair began with a catherine wheel, (a type of fireworks) the tombstone she orders late in the summer incorporates a catherine wheel in its design, her gown catches fire and she is fatally burned by the flare of a defective catherine wheel at a big party at the end of the summer. Nothing really happens; nothing is resolved as far as her character is concerned. She dies, but when she has died, what has been accomplished? Her pet cat chews off the head of the runt of her litter in the middle of Katherine's bedspread—why? And Andrew's consuming hatred, the voices he hears, the way he shouts, "Now do you hear it, Cousin Katherine? You hear the voices inside my head, don't you?" when she is in the process of burning herself to death on the front lawn of Congreve House.

Then, in the last scene, at the moment when Cousin Katherine, dying, speaks of John Shipley, "... He was not worth it." And the author has Andrew think, "... oh, no, no, he was not worth it! Victor Smithwick's friendship had not been worth the shortest moment of Cousin Katherine's love ..." the reader is jolted by the pile-driving method Miss Stafford uses to get across what should be a subtle irony.

In spite of the rather heavy and not completely successful symbolism, and the over-done irony of Katherine's death scene, it is a fine book. *The Catherine Wheel's* characters, those hilarious old eccentrics who surround Katherine in her own home, the equally amusing people of the village, the really marvelous way Miss Stafford develops the relationship between the adults and the children, and last of all her delicate, involved style make the book worth reading more than once.

VJH

Voices impose through open windows more easily  
When warmth waits on the shadows and  
The holiest breath of seasons whispers in a throat.  
Down under, the roots wrangle at insistant vagaries  
and

We know not when the waiting, vacant womb  
Must enclose upon us as the unsprung heart  
While across the waiting air come the older calls  
And we respond in denials, housing in newer needs  
Newer seasons. Faces plead in dimmer rooms  
And the irresolute heart never quite having reason  
Swings in sorrowing arcs away and away and away.

*barbara mclellan*

When the seething rhythms  
Become geometric dreams  
And take a static stance  
Against all that has gone before  
There is therein an hour built on deaths  
For hobbies. Called Awakening by some—  
The ones who never did—  
Named with many names: End-which-is-Beginning.  
Death, oh death, of many loves  
Who crept within our memories  
When our backs were turned.

The child was only three but irrevocable midnight  
Moved voraciously in the halls  
And wrinkled up the walls  
Leaving small stains from his hand.  
Unholy sea-green woke the child  
With a blaze. Drowning in the vacuum,  
Calling for a father who was, of course, dead.

Weeping we wander  
Crying we call  
Dying we stumble  
Falling we fall

Into a statement,  
Into a perplexity,  
Into a cold inorganic nightmare.

*barbara mclellan*



I know I must not remember  
Walking back through the warm wet fingers that  
    stirred me like a pudding  
Forgetting always that I too could be hungry—  
I should counterfeit myself.

Strange that out of the sterility of all yesterdays  
Asphixiating—too white to be remembered—  
Should come this too-early spring  
And I know that I cannot remember  
For the windows here are small.  
And now we revolve only for the unregretted minutes  
That live beneath the surface hours—  
Soft moss moments that never seem to grow  
But are awaiting always  
The return of naked, tender feet.

*montae imbt*



Now is not now  
Now is not even tomorrow  
Now is yesterday—still undone  
There is much too much about us yet—  
We feel that we are indivisible from yesterday  
Are we then undivorceable from all yesterdays—  
Denying existence of the marriageable tomorrows?

Not wrong, not unmeant—  
Surely I can say . . .  
Can't I say, "My love, my love?"  
No, they have ruined even that.

It's no one's fault, really, but time's—  
Careless time who cannot remember our need for now,  
And barter away five todays for one tarnished  
    moment of yesterday,  
Sentimental time, out of touch and tune with this,  
    our urgent hour.

It is terribly true.  
And I can't help asking why—  
I've got to keep asking why . . .  
There is nothing more that I can do.

Someday tomorrow can endure its presency  
And being born again into ourselves  
We will somehow understand  
The now as now.

*montae imbt*

# She was louise

by *florence bowden*

1930 - - PLANS

The man and the woman walked slowly up the cobblestone walk in front of the old house on Canby Street. They were close to each other, his arm around her, but the sight made one uneasy. Her face was grave, thoughtful, but not unhappy. His eyes were bright, almost triumphant, and his smile possessive.

"Well, Louise, the time and place are up to you. I leave the rest in your hands."

"I have already decided when, and you already know where, James." Her voice was cool, detached.

"Then suppose you tell me. I understand it's fairly necessary for the groom to be present at his own wedding." He gave a little chuckle at his own face-tiousness.

"Please, James. The date will be, I think, the twentieth of June. How does that sound?"

"Too damn far off!"

"But you promised!"

"All right, Louise. June twentieth it shall be. And where?"

"In the Methodist church right here in Claremont, of course. Where else could I get married? Father would have a fit if we went anywhere else; and besides, Dr. Barwyck has always counted on performing the ceremony for my wedding."

She turned to face him in the dim light from the porch. His was a nice face, inclined to weakness at the mouth and temple, but nice enough. At thirty-nine, he was beginning to take on some of the fat that had been his legacy since he was a paunchy sixteen, and his hair was thinning on the crown. His eyes were a nondescript blue-gray, rather small for his wide head, and the nose just a bit too Romanesque for comfort. But in spite of it all, James Elliot Dean presented an attractive picture, one of which any woman, looking to the future might be proud.

His eyes were happy, looking on her; happy and proud, knowing that at last she was his. He thought it had been a long hard struggle, but he could not have been more wrong.

In an effort to be lighthearted and gay, he attempted a step backward into adolescence, the smooching, handholding period of gawky adolescence. For all his years and supposed experience, James still did not know that you do not impress a woman when she sees you in the ridiculous attempt to seem what you are not.

She repulsed his well-meant caresses, and said she would not invite him in. It was too late. But would he come to dinner the next evening? She was sure he would like to speak to her father, soon. Yes, he would be glad to come. What time? Would seven o'clock be all right? Fine, he'd be there then.

And he, conscious of his rights as a newly accepted fiancé, bent and kissed her mouth. Her response

was but slight, and it made the man vaguely uncomfortable, but he dismissed the feeling and left, happy and satisfied with himself.

Louise watched him go down the walk and stride across the street to his automobile. Then she went inside the house and closed the door. Standing there a moment, she looked around at the graceful old furnishings, the large room with the high ceilings and double doors. She thought of all the years spent here in the house, and then she went up the stairs to her mother's room.

"Why, my dear, it's early! You're in before eleven. Did you and James quarrel?" Her small anxious face peered around from behind her spectacles.

"No, Mother, we didn't quarrel. As a matter of fact, tonight I told James we would be married!" She sat on the edge of the bed, watching the older woman, waiting for the words to sink in.

"Louise!" The slight cry was pleased—more, it was exalted. "I have wanted this for a very long time, my dear. You know how happy this makes me." Her left hand grasped that of her daughter. Small tears, so characteristic of her small self, formed in her eyes, and did not fall.

"Yes, Mother. I know you're pleased, and so am I. But do you know just how pleased I am?"

Her voice was cool still, without excitement. She gently disengaged her hand from her mother's. She wondered if this were the time and place to tell what she was thinking. And, then, knowing so well this household in which she had grown up, she realized that this perhaps would be the most feasible moment she could choose, for when the family knew of her plans, there would be no turning back. She faced her mother in sudden decision.

"What I tell you now is all true. I wouldn't explain, except that it will change some of the plans that we will make." Seeing Mrs. Madison cease her superfluous sounds of happiness, she continued:

"First of all, I am not in love with James. Please, let me finish. The family has thought so, through my design, and I have given him reason to think so, as of tonight. For two years he has plied me with gifts, and flowers, and compliments—all the things supposed to win a girl's heart. And tonight, I promised to marry him. But, he will never know that I do not love him." She stopped for a moment, then got up from the bed, stumbling over her mother's dainty mules on the floor.

"Damn!" She was tense, and she had meant to be so poised and unflustered. She drew in a deep breath, and again fastened her eyes on her mother.

"I've planned this marriage, because of all the men I have known, James is the only one who can really give me all that I want from life. He is not physically repulsive. He has money and will make more. He



has position, both here and in Philadelphia, which is where I want to live. He wants to do for me what will make me happiest, and he is able to. What else could I ask?" She had become strained again, so sure of the words that were to come, and yet desiring approval so desperately.

"Do you really want me to answer that?" Mrs. Madison's eyes were dry now, her spectacles off. She had sunk back in the bed, among her pillows.

"I don't know," came the answer, a trifle incoherent, "but go ahead."

The daughter did not see the half smile on Mrs. Madison's face, nor did she discern the exact tone of her voice as she answered:

"Nothing." There was silence.

Louise sat up straight. Though suddenly very tired, she was sure that she had heard correctly.

"Did . . . Did you say 'nothing?'"

"Exactly."

"But, why? I didn't think you'd agree with me so . . ., so . . ."

"To such a degree?" The answering nod came. "I didn't think that you would."

"You approve, then?"

"Unconditionally." Mrs. Madison's gaze was steady, her voice level. "You still doubt, don't you, Louise?"

She started, and relaxed again. "Yes, I suppose I do, a little bit."

"Well, let me tell you why." She paused for a moment. "Because I think you know—you have known for quite some time—just exactly what you want from life, and your marriage to James Dean just happens to be part of that plan. I followed a plan when I married Paul Madison, and though we were never really in love, I've had exactly the life I wanted all along. And I'm glad that you see things in just that same way." She stopped talking and reached to the bedside table for a cigarette, struck a match from the book and inhaled deeply. Then:

"Come here, Louise." The fire played with its shadows as Louise again went toward the large bed in the center of the room.

"I never knew we were so much alike before. I'm glad."

"So am I. Then there won't be any objections to my going ahead with our plans?"

"None whatever. And, Louise, make sure your plans are complete, that you make no errors."

"I'll be sure, and things won't go wrong." She swiftly kissed her mother and left the room, closing the door lightly behind her. Her thoughts tumbled around one after the other, and when she finally slept, her plans were complete.

The next weeks were filled with the usual pleasant tasks of making ready for a wedding. One by one the necessary things were done, and Louise was pleased

with the progress. Her clothes had long ago been selected. Now they were bought, altered, and ready for packing. The house in the suburbs of Philadelphia, in Germantown, had been bought and remodeled. The wedding gifts were displayed tastefully in the front rooms, and the last day of May dawned warm and rainy.

"James and I are going to church this afternoon to see Dr. Barwyck and make final plans for the twentieth. Can I do anything for you before then, Mother?" Louise's calm self walked around to her place at the table, and she sat down.

"Good morning, Annie. Yes, some eggs, I think, and a biscuit. And, no cream in the coffee."

"No thank you, dear. Paul, have you attended to the little matter of silver I spoke to you about?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact, I have. Saw about that last week. Old Thompson was very reasonable, come to think about it. It's all arranged." He rose from his chair, bestowed smiles on the two women still seated, kissed his wife, and went out toward the porch with the *Inquirer* under his arm.

"That was a speedy exit, wasn't it?"

"Yes, but you know your father. He always wants to keep any secrets he possibly can. I didn't tell him you'd already made the selection over a month ago, and he's terribly pleased to be in on a surprise.

She smiled a little, and then; "Now, is there anything we've forgotten? I don't see how, what with all the lists from everyone who knows the least bit about weddings and getting married. Oh, Louise, please do remember to get the rest of those thank-you notes written before the twentieth. Will you, dear?" She looked up, saw Louise's eyes upon her, and smiled. "I think I'll finish the reception list this morning. What about you?"

"Where's Margaret? We planned to pick out the presents for the bridesmaids, and I don't think she's even up yet." She touched the bell beside the leg of the table.

"Annie, would you please tell my sister that I am ready for town, and ask her if she plans to go with me. Thank you." The maid disappeared out into the hall, toward the stairs.

"When James calls, Mother, tell him to meet us at the Tea Room on Claridge Street at two this afternoon. We should be back in time, and our appointment is for three with Dr. Barwyck." She went to the buffet, poured a second cup of coffee, and drank it.

"Miss Margaret says she's ready in the car, if you will join her, Miss Louise." She smiled and hurriedly left the room.

"Thank you, Annie," called Louise. "Good-bye, Mother. We'll both be here for dinner, and unless Margaret stays in town, she'll see you by three."



ellen farmer

"Good-bye, dear. Have a good day shopping."

"Thanks." She grabbed her purse and umbrella from the hall table and dashed to the car. With a burst of carbon monoxide, the coupe was off to the city.

Promptly at three o'clock that afternoon the couple knocked at the study of the Claremont Methodist church, and Dr. Clinton Barwyck opened the door to them.

"Welcome, children. Come in, come in." His eyes twinkled, but the black suit, slightly worn at the elbows, was shiny. He led the way to the group of chairs among his books. "Here, sit down."

"Thank you, Dr. Barwyck. I guess you know why we're here."

"Yes, Louise, I know. But there isn't any hurry about that. Let's just chat a while first. Tell me, James how's that house in Philadelphia coming along? We hate to lose you here."

"The house is coming along fine. They've almost finished with the decorating. I rather hate to leave Claremont myself, but Louise and I decided that, all things considered, Philly was the place for us, so . . ."

"Yes, I know. Well, down to business. Now, what about the decoration for the chancel?"

The three heads bent close together for awhile, and then the older man rose and escorted his two friends to the door. "Good-bye, Louise, James. May God bless you and your marriage."

#### 1940 - - - PREPARATION

"But why, Mamma?" The thin voice came over the telephone. "Why can't I stay up town and eat lunch with Daddy? Aunt Margaret said she thought you wouldn't mind." The voice held tears, and Louise sternly put the image away from her.

"Never mind, Ashley. Do as I tell you. I shall expect you home in time for lunch at one o'clock. Good-bye, dear." She replaced the receiver in its cradle and sat for a moment examining her calendar.

"Hairdresser, at eleven. Dr. Michaels, at three. Cocktails at the Scotts at six. Dinner with Sam and Marsha at eight. That leaves the children here alone tonight. Sara, will you please stay tonight with the children? Sara!"

"Yes, Mrs. Dean?" The woman was tall, young, extremely pretty.

"Sara, I shall expect you to stay here tonight with Ashley and Paul. Is that agreeable?"

"Yes, of course, Mrs. Dean. I had made some other plans, but, I guess they can be changed." Her face was immobile, less like flesh than stone.

"Thank you, Sara. Would you like to have another night off in exchange?" Her voice was faintly mocking, nearly condescending.

"No. That's all right, Mrs. Dean. We'll average up, sometime."

"Very well. That's all."

"Yes'm." The girl turned to go. "Mrs. Dean, is it tomorrow you're leaving for Claremont?"

"Yes. At noon. We're planning to be there in time for dinner, but it's impossible to leave until after church."

"Yes'm. Would there be anything else, Mrs. Dean?"

"Thank you, but I think not. You've arranged for the children's clothes to be packed, and Mr. Dean's? I shall attend to my own." She glanced up from her list. "That's all, Sara."

Louise wondered if this would be like all other Christmases in Claremont, with her father making such a fuss over the children, and James, half-afraid, trying to do the same thing. With the antics of the older generation to put up with as well as the pranks of the younger, it became more difficult to restrain the children at all at Christmas. Sometimes she even wished they didn't have to go back to Claremont at Christmas and all the family birthdays. Silly, sentimental drivel. Somehow, it didn't seem fitting, this eternal reference to the days gone by, this tradition.

The sound of the telephone startled her. She picked up the dropped pencil and lifted the receiver.

"Yes?"

"Louise?" The voice was unsure.

"Yes, James, this is Louise."

"Dear, don't you think Ashley could stay down here for lunch? I had her call because she thought it would be exciting, but, well, won't it be all right?"

"James, I've told Ashley that she is to be home for lunch, and I expect her to be here."

"I know what you've told her, but why shouldn't she stay?"

"James, how many times do I have to remind you: when I tell the children to do something, I feel it is necessary for them to do it. Besides, she gets much too excited over being in town with you. And, you may remember, we're going home to Claremont tomorrow. It won't do for too much to pile up here at the last minute. Now, please, will you see that she gets here by one?"

"Yes, of course, my dear. Are we still planning cocktails at the Scott's?"

"Of course. Why should we have changed our plans?"

"No reason dear, just checking. And I'll send Ashley home in time for lunch."

"Thank you, dear. Good-bye."

Husbands, parents, and children. They had their place in life, but they certainly were a lot of trouble. Now, that list of presents for the family. Best check those first . . .

The room was hot, and Louise felt terribly uncomfortable. That last Martini must have been a little too dry. Certainly did make one feel stuffy, so clogged up inside. She went to the window, overlooking the lights of the mid-town district. Useless was the word. What was the use of standing here, drinking a little more, making a little more casual conversation at dinner and then going home for another evening of playing 'Why?' with the children? She turned, sought James' face and found it, slightly

flushed, bending over a tray of canapes, choosing a vile-looking concoction of olives and cucumbers. In a moment she was beside him.

"James, do let's go now. I'm tired."

"Sure, honey. We'll go now. Where's Angie? Say, Scott, this was a swell party. We'll get together out at the Club one night after Christmas, okay? See you around."

They went for her coat, and she felt relief as the cool lining touched her skin.

"Nice party, Louise."

"Yes, it was. Angie can be an excellent hostess. And I like the idea of our giving one at the Club in January. Let's make it a bang-up affair, sort of Leap Year Party, near the first."

"Say, that's fine with me. You plan so well, Louise. I've never gotten over it, as long as we've been married now; more than ten years."

"Why, James." Her voice drifted down the corridor as they waited for the elevator.

"And another thing."

"Yes?"

"Our marriage—it's good. The children are fine, and I'm doing better than either of us ever thought. And, Louise, it's all due to you." He looked very earnest, almost young again, in spite of his fifty years. She was touched by his sincerity, knowing that these thoughts came rarely to him except in moments of complete relaxation, and she was proud. For it was true, all of it.

The elevator door swung open, and the sad face of the operator peered out at them from his cage.

"Down."

The couple entered the car, and the door closed.

In the hurry of the next day, Louise remembered their conversation in the corridor on the eighth floor of the apartment house. And she thought, This is the tribute I have worked for. I have made James happy by his doing what I wanted. And now, the children must learn.

The trip to Claremont was short, there were no mishaps, and the welcome at the old house on Canby Street was as traditional as Christmas itself. That day, and the next, went on as always, peaceful in the thoughts of Christmas soon to come.

On Christmas Eve, little Paul ran in from outside, with the hood on his snowsuit sprinkled with white.

"Mamma, it's snowing! Look, snow! Look, Mamma!" He pointed to the flakes on the arms.

"Please, Paul. You've seen snow before. It's not an occasion for such exuberance." She detached his small arms from her hands and stood.

The little boy was puzzled. He blinked back a tear and turned away.

"Paul."

"Yes'm." He stopped.

"Please don't pout. Now go back out and play, but be careful not to get your feet wet."

The little boy's smile was back. "We're gonna build a snowman. Would you like to help us, Mamma?"

"No, thank you. Not this time. Is Ashley there with you?"

"No. She's off playing dolls with somebody. She won't help at all."

"Oh, then perhaps you shouldn't be there by yourself. Wait till your father gets back later this afternoon. I'm sure he'll help you." In spite of herself, she smiled at his enthusiasm, and touched his hand. "Never mind, Paul. Later."

Christmas Eve came and went. The next day was bright, with the sun shining on the packed snow around the trees. The family was warm and together as never before. The children, happy as children are at Christmas, over the trappings that are Santa Claus and the joys that all children have, were still exclaiming over their new possessions. It was evening and Mrs. Madison called them all into a snack supper in the dining room.

Louise stood by the tree, serene in her happiness. Her children were strong: Paul growing fast and Ashley almost a young lady, more poised than any child of nine should be. James, dear James, doing well, but aging in the chaotic world of the present. She thought of the years to come, those past. Life was good, for she was happy and this was her work. Because of her, their family was here, happy, together.

She could not help dreaming a little of what might happen as the children grew. She wanted Ashley, soon to be a beautiful girl, to be poised, sure of herself, know what life is all about; and Paul, perhaps a little short in stature, clean-cut, very sure, and almost wise. Of James, only that he continue to show his love in living the way that she thought best.

"Mama."

She turned. "Yes, Paul, what is it?"

"Will it really be another whole year before Santa Claus comes again?"

"I'm afraid so. A whole year."

"But I want him to come again now, tonight!"

"I think not. After all, he has to make toys and dolls all year round to give at Christmas, and he must have already begun for next year. Don't you imagine so?"

"Yes'm. Good night, Mamma."

"Good night, Paul."

#### 1950 - - - FULFILLMENT

"I wonder what she'd say, if she were here, Grandmother, if she knew." The girl held up the page of the newspaper.

"Ashley, I think—no, I'm sure, she would approve. You've grown up as she wanted you to, as she planned a long time ago."

Mrs. Madison took the paper from her hand. "I remember, it was nearly twenty-one years ago when



sidney cain

Louise and James were making plans, and her pictures came out in the *Claremont Times*, something like yours."

"We sort of look alike, don't we?" The girl's eager face was glowing, her color high.

"Yes, very much alike, except that I think you're prettier than either Louise or I ever were. We were very much alike, when she was married."

"Grandmother, I wish she were here, just for a little while, now."

"So do I, child. She missed those years, not knowing you as you grew up. That was Louise's life, watching you children, as you were growing."

"It's always strange, at first, when I don't remember for a while that she's dead. Even after four years, I still expect her to walk in the door and take off her hat and say, 'Well, Ashley, what shall we do now?'"

"Yes, I know. Sometimes I feel the same way, never remembering that she isn't with us any more. We haven't changed any of the household, or the way things were done, and even the color schemes are still just the way she planned. She was a very strong person."

"And that, my dear grandmother, was the understatement of the year. Let's talk of something else. This is sort of—morbid." She laughed nervously and got up from the chair.

"Do you think we can be married in January, or is that too soon after Christmas? Charles is in such a hurry. He'd say 'tomorrow' if I'd let him."

"They always would, dear. Yes, I think January would be fine. That times things very well: Right after your twentieth birthday, a year after your debut. What could be nicer?"

"Not much, I don't think. But do you think we can be married in Philadelphia? I love Claremont, but it's so traditional, and Charles and I—well, we both feel like we'd rather be married from our home church. Do you think Daddy will mind, too much?" She looked slightly worried, a little uncertain. "He has his heart set on so many things for Paul and me. I hate to disappoint him."

"I know, Ashley, but you have to handle men, and your father had plenty of handling from Louise."

She smiled, remembering.

"Let's plan, Grandmother, and then talk them over with daddy tonight, with Charles."

"Very well, dear. Formal, informal, or semi-formal?"

"What?"

"The wedding, dear. Remember, you are planning to get married!"

"I know, but it's so new, and I don't know—yes, I guess I do know how to go about it." She got up,

slim in her tallness. Her eyes wandered over the room; modern, clean, and a reminder of Louise. She walked to the window and looked out.

"There's Daddy now, his car's out back. He must have crept in, so quiet. Here he comes, up the walk."

She ran to the door and greeted the big man in the gray suit.

"Hello there. My, you look rushed. Have a busy day?"

"I suppose. Your grandmother here?"

"Um-m. In the living room. Let me take your coat, and hang it up."

"Thanks, Ashley. When you have, would you come in the den, please? I'd like to talk to you." The heavy steps as he crossed the room jarred the figurines on the mantle, and the girl, puzzled at his seriousness, hastily followed him.

"When are you and Charles planning the big event? Not three weeks from Wednesday, or some foolish date like that, I hope?" He smiled indulgently at his only daughter.

"Not exactly, Daddy. In January, if that's all right with you." She was deferential to him, unusual in Ashley Dean, but unnoticed by her father.

"That's better than I thought, but I wish your mother were here. There's no end to what might be done between now and that day in January. She'd have fixed it so we could celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas and not even realize a bigger event was coming up." Dean's face, never firm, was soft, remembering.

"You don't think it'll be that way anyhow?" That curiously persistent voice.

"Honey, not even you could be that capable; not even you and your grandmother together." He looked straight toward her, but missed her glance of determination.

"We'll see, Daddy. And, now, I think dinner's almost ready. Shall we go in?"

Ashley and Mrs. Madison rapidly made their careful plans for everything to be done and set about seeing about it. The older woman, hampered by age, was forced to leave most of it up to Ashley, and when it came to getting things done, she looked as if she might come through with flying colors.

The fall days slipped by: it was Thanksgiving. Then winter came and with it, Christmas. And James Dean was wrong about his daughter, for they had never kept Christmas so vibrantly before. The New Year promised a clear and cold January, unmissed by storms and hurricanes. Charles was a frequent visitor at the house in Germantown, and one afternoon, three days before the wedding, and after he had just left for his bachelor dinner, the two women sat together in the den, musing over the events of the past week.

"It won't be long now, Grandmother. Just three days." She smiled, a hidden sort of smile, and yawned.

"Must be too hot in here. Or are you comfortable?"

(Continued on Page 23)



# Lay me down to sleep

a story by *jarrad denhard*

The faceless man sat in the leather chair by the fireplace stroking the cat. It was the strange, intelligent looking cat with the dead-moss fur. The one that had belonged to my father. It purred and the sound filled the room, pressing against the walls. Three children played together on the floor drawing the attention of the man. He had a face then and it smiled. The smile became a bitter grimace as the woman spit the accusing words at him. He answered but she did not seem to notice. He shook his head as she pointed to the picture of the woman in the newspaper she held. The man was in the picture too.

The woman tore the picture into tatters of paper that floated to the floor. They seemed to grow and grow, piling one on top of the other, until they were a mountain of dirty snow. She trampled the mountain with angry feet and it vanished, leaving just the tattered shreds of paper.

The man's face laughed again and he spoke first to the woman, then to the cat. He stroked the cat fondly and the purring grew louder. The walls of the room began to quiver. The woman strode across the room, her face distorted and wild. She reached the leather chair and grabbed the cat from the man's lap and threw it with all her strength across the room. The cat hit the doorpost and fell in a crooked twitching shadow on the floor. But the purring grew louder and louder. The walls bent out and straightened to its broken rhythm.

The man was standing now. He looked at the woman with an expression almost of pity. He turned and walked out of the room not looking at the broken body by the door. The purr was a throbbing roar now. The woman reached out to the empty doorway, but the retreating shadow was gone. She grabbed two of the children as they tried to run after the shadow and pulled them with her out of the room. The other child was left alone in the room. She ran to the twitching cat and crouched down beside it. The roar reached a pulsing crescendo. It stopped—and the walls of the room toppled down, crushing the girl and the cat under them.

I awoke to the sound of my own frightened crying. I was huddled on the edge of the bed, the covers in a tangle over me. I threw them back. It was morning and I did not want to see it. It glared in the window at me with steel-gray eyes and told me I was not wanted here. I felt that sick feeling rise over me again, stronger now, and I cowered beneath it until the anger came.

"You're too late, don't bother to tell me I don't belong here. Go away. You're too late. Mother told me last night."

Liz appeared in the doorway and for a moment I was afraid I had shouted aloud. But no, she was carrying my forbidden cup of coffee. Her placid face calmed me and I thanked her. She asked me if I had slept well and I told her no, I had dreamed all night. She said that was too bad. She picked up the cup. I didn't want her to leave, that sick feeling would come back.

"Liz?"

"Hmm?"

"What was the name of daddy's cat?"

"Which one, honey? He had so many."

"I only remember one—the one that died the night that daddy left. What was his name?"

"Now what got you to thinking about that? It was almost eight years ago. Let's see—Blitz, that's it. His name was Blitz. But you mustn't start thinkin' about your daddy again. You're old enough to understand all that now . . . Seventeen . . . Land, it's hard to believe."

She left the room shaking her head.

Nice Liz. She tried to lead me away from my dream, but I had to stay. I had to remember it all now. It started so long ago, when my father left. I can't remember much about those years—just isolated scenes, little things; and the sick feeling that got stronger and deeper with each one.

My mother taking Tommy to the movies to see the *Wizard of Oz*. I wanted to go, too. It was my favorite story, but . . .

"No, Tommy. Lydia isn't going with us dear. This is just a little party for my favorite child and me."

I didn't go, of course. I stayed home to watch the baby. . . And much later, Tommy, taller now than me, lying on my bed crying. His cat had been found poisoned.

"I can't believe mother did it, Lyd. She couldn't have." He tried to stifle the sob that choked off the words. "She knew how much I loved Midnight."

"Stop being a baby, Tommy. I saw her buy the arsenic and she hated that cat, probably because you loved it so. Why cry about it? If you did anything about it, it would be different."

He raised his head from the bed and stared at me. "Do what? The only thing I could do that would bother her would be to run away."

I laughed at him. —"You don't think I could? I'll show you and her too. I'm old enough to get along by myself."

The sick feeling went away for awhile when Tommy was gone and I was happy, but it rolled back over me in a sea of humiliation as Johnny grew up to take the place that Tommy had left, the place that I wanted.

The sick feeling doesn't leave me any more. It has settled in this room with me, alive and angry. Sometimes I can smell it and taste its bitter flavor.

I didn't want to think about it any more. I pulled the covers over my head and let the heavy sleep pull me down and away from it. When I awoke a steady rain had set in and the household bustled with that after-breakfast busyness that comes before a settled day. Liz was back in the kitchen washing up. I could hear her chatting with the little black cat from down the street that she'd let in for his morning bowl of milk. Thru the crack in my door I watched the little cat playing with Johnny on the floor—paying for his meal.

I guess she must have forgotten that mother was going to fit the new slipcover to the living room chair this morning. Mother tripped down the stairs in her "Aren't I the busy homemaker" fashion, glanced in the kitchen and dropped the box of pins in her hand.

I can still hear her voice, shrill and strident, repeating the same words of the same scene in the same play that we'd all acted out with her at one time or another. Even the physical gestures were the same. The hand that had dropped the pins clinched. She stamped her right foot—never her left, there was a corn on that foot—and twisted her mouth to fit the words.

"Get it out! Get-it-out-of-my-house. How many times must I tell you that I won't have those mangy, vicious animals in my house!"

Liz reached for the little cat, frozen into an ebony statue—aware, ready, but not afraid. But mother's foot caught the little cat under the ribs sending him sailing across the floor, feet tangled, head thrown back in pain. He did not cry out—only lay in a limp bundle near the door, a rag-doll creature with no feeling, no will in it. Liz crossed the room swiftly and scooped the cat up in her hands, gentling him before she put him out in the raw, dripping day.

When she had shut the door, she stood for a while looking steadily at my mother and then spoke quietly in her tired emotionless voice. I tried to hear what she said, knowing that she of all people could reduce mother from hysterical anger to tears, but her voice was drowned by Johnny's hurt, baffled crying. As I turned to close my door and tiptoe back to the bed, Johnny's crying resolved into words—words that held me motionless at the side of the bed.

"Hate you!" . . . His high pitch rang with all the fury of a small boy who has been too often thwarted . . . "You're mean and you kicked my cat and I hate you . . ." The words tumbled out breathlessly as if he had to say them quickly before he lost the spirit instilled into him by anger.

"Your cat? So now it's your cat, young man. We'll see about that!"

Then her voice changed and she spoke in that wheedling, whining tone that made my blood turn thick.

"Johnny doesn't really mean that, now does he. My little man doesn't really love that nasty old cat more than his own mommy?" . . . I could see the crocodile tears in her eyes . . . "Tell mommy you didn't really mean you hated her, darling."

There was a long silence. Standing by the bed I felt the muscles in my body tense as I waited, listened, hoped for Johnny's reply. It came —

"No, mommy. I love you mor'n anything. Better'n any old cat."

The test had come and it was too much for him. I sank down on the bed, relaxing in spite of my unreasonable fury at my little brother. Little Johnny Turncoat. Weak, spineless Johnny Turncoat.

Seeing in my mind's eye the tearful reconciliation in the kitchen, I made my way over to the back window, and stared out at the lowering day, trying to let the driving rain wash the scene from the dirty windows of my mind. It didn't work. The rain drops on the glass before me were Johnny's tears. Thru it's patter I could hear the whine of my mother's voice in the wind rushing thru the stunted bushes under my window—the wind that bent the bushes as my mother had bent Johnny's will, and the sound sent the waves of the sick feeling crashing over me.

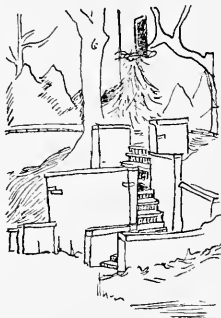
A stationary shadow reached my consciousness—still, unmoving among a sea of murmuring, rustling things. The cat, the little black cat was still there at the foot of the step. He sat rigid, staring intensely at the house, the door, as if the small cold eyes could penetrate into that room of pain and horror—unmindful of the rain that was matting the gleaming fur into tufts of dull, dripping black.

How he must hate her—this small black animal with the courage not to cry out when he had been hurt, not to run away when he had been shut out. How his pride must crave revenge for being trampled and slighted so often. She had with one blow killed comfort and companionship, the things he most wanted and had need of. How could he with one blow deprive her of her most precious possession? What was it?

Johnny ran out on the step to find the shoes he had left in the rain. The little cat stiffened at the sight of him and held his gaze for a long time on the figure of the small boy.

"Johnny baby, come in out of the rain. Mommy doesn't want you to catch cold."

Johnny turned and went inside. The little cat relaxed, sat thoughtfully for a minute and then splattered through the wet grass out of sight. I felt the tension leave my body. I was very tired. I crept to my bed and lay down to sleep.



BL SCHOONOVER  
ART 101-D  
barbara schoonover

I guess even nature gets tired of storms and dullness. The following day was beautiful with that blue-green sharply-etched crispness that make you feel the brisk cold and smell the trees and grass that are airing out the dampness of them in the morning sun. I never realized how wonderful a brilliant, laughing day could be until I was shut in away from it.

It was peaceful here in the house for a change. Mother was getting ready to retire to the sewing room for the day. That's upstairs high enough and back far enough to spare me any sudden visits. Johnny was clamoring to go outside to play. There was, as I had supposed, an argument in the offing. It was too peaceful.

"Why, mommy? Why can't I? I'll be real careful, honest I will."

"No, dear, not until mommy can go with you. Stay with Lydia and play with her."

At this point it seemed best for me to get into the conversation if only to protect my day's privacy.

"Surely if he's careful he could play outside, mother. What could possibly hurt him?"

"Now Lydia, you know how heavy traffic has been in front of the house since the highway has been detoured through here. It's like you to suggest such a thing. Johnny cannot play outside and that is final. What if something should happen to him?" . . . Oh, nothing must happen to Johnny; not to her pride and joy.

Mother went upstairs and left Johnny with me. He was sulky but obedient to the last. For a little peace and quiet I consented to read to him. I had reached the middle of a story by Poe that he couldn't understand and had looked out of the window to rest my eyes. They caught the gleam of sunlight on the black coat of the little cat. He was back—this time in the front yard, new territory for him—gamboling lightly among the few tossing leaves, running first close to the house, then skittering to the edge of the road.

Was it my imagination, or did he stop still occasionally, to stare at the house, resting, or thinking,—or planning?

I closed the book and dropped it to the floor. Immediately little John complained, but I told him I was tired. He would have to amuse himself for a while. He didn't know how . . . He didn't have anything to do. I told him to watch the scenery. He turned unenthusiastically to the window; the scene caught his attention and held him there. Over his shoulder I could see the little cat still playing in a gay frenzy of activity.

"See, the little cat knows how to amuse himself. What a good time he's having. Cats make such good playmates."



*evelyn griffin*

"I wish," Johnny began excitedly, but then he remembered. Mother said no.

"It's a shame mother won't let you go out."

A shadow passed over his face and he turned back to the window. All afternoon the little cat played. All afternoon Johnny sat at the window, his nose pressed against the glass, eyes following the enticing moods of the shifting, flashing animal. At dusk the little cat suddenly stopped playing and slipped quietly away. He must have been very tired. The day had been long and strenuous. Johnny, who had babbled constantly all day about this movement and that game, became silent and subdued.

Dinner was very peaceful.

Good things come in lots they say, and it must be true of good days as well. The next few days tried to outdo that first enchanting one of crisp sunshine. The weather was almost too beautiful, making one feel that something or someone should draw a cloud over that shimmering blue, or smear the laughing green with mud, or bend the swishing grass with heavy rain. Such days as these should be spent on everyone, but I could only sit and watch from my bedroom window—watch others enjoy it.

The spirit of the weather even reached out to touch my mother, bringing her out of isolation in the sewing room for a shopping trek to town. She needed more material for the curtains she was making for the upstairs hall window. She insisted that Johnny go with her, but he, already frozen at my window, did not want to tear himself away from his pleasant vigil. Before the look in her eye and the tone of her voice, however, his resolution crumbled and he left the house with mother, only turning once to scan the lawn before he was drawn again into her possessive clutch.

Poor weak Johnny. It was so easy to turn him and twist him. Anyone could do it.

The little cat came again that day, and played for a short while as before. I could even feel myself applauding his antics as they reflected his swift, changeable moods. But even as I in my mind reached out to join him, he stopped, as if he realized that he had no audience this day. He vanished, leaving only the sunlight glittering on the grass.

. . . When Johnny and mother came home, they found me restless and impatient. I had been reading all day. Johnny was sulky and mother was tired. We did not talk much at dinner.

The next day mother again shut herself up in the sewing room, leaving Johnny with me. She ordered me several different times and many different ways to take care of Johnny and to see that he didn't come to any harm.

"For heaven's sake, mother! Do you think I'm going to strangle him with my bedsheet or something?" She did not reply.

I did not feel like reading or playing with Johnny that morning. The little cat was late and Johnny was bored. He sat on the floor fiddling with the bedspread until I snapped at him. Quick tears flooded his eyes as he drew away from me, crushed. I looked out of the window to regain my composure and caught a glimpse of the little cat tripping across the lawn.

I reached for Johnny's hand. "I'm sorry honey. Look, let's play games with the little cat."

He brightened immediately, starting up to look for his playmate, then sank down again. "Can't," he said querulously, "Can't go out to play. Mommy won't let me. Besides, you're in bed."

"Oh, we can play anyway. From here. It's not the same but let's try it."

"What'll we play?"

"Let's play run and catch. See, the little cat runs real fast and then stops and plays like mad for awhile. Doesn't that look like fun? When he runs we'll run too, and try to catch him. If we do we can play with him. You want to play with the little cat, don't you?"

Johnny's eyes sparkled and his whole body tensed as he got ready to "run."

"Run, Johnny. That's right! You caught him. Isn't he soft and cuddly?"

Johnny laughed gleefully and took a deep breath as he got ready to "run" again . . . All afternoon we played this fascinating game. I laughed with Johnny and spurred him on as his imagination raced across the lawn with the little cat. Late in the afternoon mother called Johnny to come up and keep her company for a while. He scowled and trudged out of the room mumbling . . . "I'm coming. I'm coming. But I won't tell you. It's my game and I won't tell you about it. So there!"

I felt a smile curl my lips and turned my head to hide it, glancing out of the window in time to see the little cat make a mad dash out into the road. The car, right on him, slammed on its brakes as he skittered back away from it. He sat still there at the edge of the road and the car drove on. Then he melted wearily into the dusk. I felt a satisfied fatigue engulfing me. I closed my eyes and went to sleep at once.

It was morning and Johnny raced into my room right after breakfast, already bubbling in anticipation of the fun he was going to have. When the little cat finally arrived, Johnny was keyed up into a veritable frenzy of impatience. We played for a while, but somehow the imagination game was different for Johnny this time. He was so near and yet so far from his heart's desire. Finally his restlessness consumed him and he turned away from the window.

"Come on, Johnny, let's play some more run and catch. The little cat isn't tired at all."

"No. Don't wanta. It's no fun in here. I wanta go out and play with him."

"Now, Johnny, don't start that. Mother says you can't, even if I think it's silly, and you have to obey her don't you?"

"I don't have to. I don't have to do anything. She can't stop me."

"She would if she knew about it, dear."

It was enough.

"You wouldn't tell her? You wouldn't? Promise me you won't tell her."

Still afraid of her. He wanted to break away, but he was still afraid of her.

"All right. All right, Johnny. Go on, I won't tell her, but don't blame me if anything happens or she finds out."

But he was already out of the room, catching up his red coat from the hall chair, racing as quietly as he could for the side door and freedom at last.

"Goodbye Johnny," I whispered as the door clicked after him. Such a sweet boy.

I crossed the room and stood at the side of the window, watching as he rounded the corner. The little cat was sitting close to the house waiting. When he saw Johnny he sat for a second longer, then leaped up and frisked off a few feet, stopped and rolled over in a black bundle alive with fun. Johnny, crowing aloud, caught him there. They tussled and batted at each other. The little cat broke away—ran a little farther. Johnny sprang up from the ground, his eyes alight for the chase.

Johnny was right. The game was much more fun with two playing it. I shifted closer to the window, clinching my hand in the curtain to steady myself, as the game moved farther from my line of vision. Now they were clearly outlined against the white road in the background, the red coat and the black one.

The sound of footsteps above me tried to penetrate my thoughts, but only a vague fear came through. She mustn't reach the window yet. It wasn't time.

My eyes drew my mind back to the scene before me. A flash of black on white with a bouncing streak of red. A crow of laughter—then the speeding, hulking shadow—the squeal of rubber on concrete and the red coat lay still.

For a fleeting second my eyelids shut out the scene, reflecting from some unseen source the picture of the little boy's face, the terror chasing the expectant joy across his features, then an awful stillness smoothing the grimace away.

The footsteps above me quickened and reached the upstairs window. Her scream broke the spell fastening me there. The now hysterical feet scrambled down the hall to the steps. I opened my eyes. They moved deliberately over the motionless parts of the whole—the road, the car, the kneeling driver, the still-formed boy—the cat. They reached the solitary figure of the little black cat. He shook himself as if



to throw off a trance and padded swiftly away from the group. They did not seem to notice.

Then she was there, looking strangely alone in the midst of the growing crowd.

Why not? She was alone now.

I took my hand from the curtain, walked to my bed, and lay down . . . I was very tired, but the sick feeling was gone.

## She Was Louise

*(Continued from Page 18)*

"You might check the thermostat. I think it's a little warm."

"Just a minute." She left the room, then was back in a moment.

"A little high, so I turned it down."

"Fine, my dear."

"I can't believe that in three days I'll be married!"

"You've done a splendid job, getting ready for it, better even than Louise, but I would never have said that until now."

"Better than Mother? I'm so proud, when you say that. And you know, Grandmother, we must have been very much alike at the same ages."

"No, not quite. You're older, even at twenty, than she. But, it's very strange, the resemblance that you two have for each other. Except for one thing: you don't think exactly alike. Your goals—I think they're different." She was thoughtful.

"Grandmother, when mother married, was she in love with Daddy? Aunt Margaret says she doesn't know, but you do. Was she?"

"What made you ask that, the one question I must answer and cannot? Why? But you might as well know the truth, and perhaps you'll profit by knowing. No, Ashley, not really. But she came to love him a very great deal before she died."

"No, she didn't, not really. I know about those last years. I was old enough to understand, but I could never figure out the first few years." She turned to look at her grandmother. "It's amazing, the way I remember things she said, even ways she looked, years ago. Grandmother, what would you say if I told you why I'm marrying Charles, the real why?" The girl's face had grown tense, not beautiful any more. And the old woman looked away, then back.

"My dear, I would say, 'You are your mother's daughter.'"

## The Game

*(Continued from Page 9)*

of all days, with Jonathan Bingham, the town's richest banker, on the verge of death. How could he show his widow his most expensive coffin when it was red and yellow striped?

"David!" he thundered.

"Y—yes, Daddy," David said, walking slowly towards his father.

"I have told you to stay out of the funeral home. And this room is a part of it. You know that, David."

"But Daddy, it's like a play room," David said, his eyes on his father's shining black shoes.

"This is no game room; it's a business room. You're not too young to understand that. Death—" he paused, running his fingers through his dark hair. "Death . . . it's a wonderful, noble thing that we all must go through." He spoke rather pompously, as if he were addressing an audience instead of only one small boy.

That small boy raised his eyes from his father's shoes and said, "I know that, Daddy."

Mr. Howard was slightly taken aback by his son's reply. David is interested in death and funerals, he thought to himself.

"Well, David," he said slowly, as if calculating the weight of each word, "it's our job to help the people who are going through this new, strange experience. We help them find the right casket at the right cost, and we help them select the right clothes for their departed ones to wear, and we help them in fixing their hair, just so, and we help them in every way possible. Now can't you see that you weren't helping them at all by wrecking this room?"

"Yes, Daddy."

"Let's straighten up the room now, David."

"Oh goody! Another game!" David said.

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